

EXAMINATION OF SOME KEY INSTITUTIONS AND SECTORS IN NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently facing several economic, political, social and environmental issues, all of which are detrimental to Nigerians. It is therefore necessary to engage in pertinent discussions that can help to move the nation forward in every sphere of the society; academic sphere being one of the most important avenues to disseminate knowledge that can help induce a pivotal change in the status quo of the Nigerian society.

This article will help to present ideas, opinions and solutions that hopefully will not be misconstrued and subjected to travesty. Politics and the political will are not mutually exclusive when it comes to the issue of nation building and development. The intention of this article is to stay clear of politics as much as possible (as it has the tendency to polarise the public) but to sensitise the conscience of Nigerians to decide the trajectory of Nigeria.

Keywords: *Circumvent, Inalienable, Conscience, Disenfranchised and Gladiator*

Introduction:

Nigeria in a state of comatose, at the precipice and tending fast towards state collapse (Oby Esekwesili) with many issues to tackle on different fronts, and unfortunately at the behest of inept and incompetent leadership across board. The fundamental issue of the unity of Nigeria needs to be discussed with the relevant stakeholders (Nigerians and those that are elected to lead them) chairing the discussion to renegotiate the union. The importance of this sacrosanct issue cannot be over-emphasized as the country currently has no guiding philosophy hence the proliferation of tribal supremacy and ethnic chauvinism.

It is no surprise that Nigerians will rather identify as Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa etc before identifying themselves as a Nigerian. Hence, there is need for a concerted effort to answer the questions who is a Nigerian? and what drives us as a Nation?

Having made some assertions above, it is important to highlight the polemic issues that are betiding and plaguing the nation. High unemployment; 23.1% as at

Q3 of 2018 (Trading Economics) whilst youth unemployment is around 55.4% (Aljazeera). Therefore, it's not difficult to understand the reason for the rampant rate of social vices in the society.

In addition to this, the alarming rate of insecurity, incessant killings, kidnappings, banditry and robbery cannot but be linked to the fact that the preponderant agile youth population are unemployed; after all, "idle hands are the devil's tools".

Education

The impact of Education on the citizenry seems to be trivial as an average Nigerian cannot engage in a discussion without resorting to frivolity, abuse based on tribal and ethnocentric sentiments. Important values that are interconnected with education seems to have been eroded or completely absent from the curriculum. Globally, it is believed that graduates of universities would have acquired a range of skill set that will be transferable in any sector where they end-up after graduation.

What is the state of education in Nigeria today? no doubt the elites (political class) understand the power of good quality education that imparts sound knowledge into the students. However, they have continued to starve the educational sector the resources it needs to meet acceptable global standards. A common question a lot of Nigerians ask is why Nigerian elites/ politicians who studied, travels to Europe, America et al, fail to implement the same education system or even infrastructure they see abroad in Nigeria?

Unsurprisingly, the Nigerian education system is marred with examination malpractices, bribery, and sexual harassment. The high level of moral decadence appears not to correlate with the high level of religiosity Nigeria is known for. People are quick to point fingers at the "leaders for the debacle we behold" however, fail to see the wrong in cheating their neighbours, stealing allocated funds to government departments. The Nigerian society appears to be hyper-materialistic with an insatiable quest for wealth at all and every cost.

There is an urgent need to completely overhaul the educational system and introduce a convivial educational system that will cater for vocational and professional sectors or jobs. From observation of some government universities, it seems that some lecturers have structured their courses to prevent people from getting a first class; it would be audacious to attempt to get first class degree classification.

Nigerian Mentality

According to Professor P. Lumumba (former director of Anti-corruption commission in Kenya) "Democracy survives on the vigilance of the citizens, Democracy does not exist in a vacuum" Sadly the citizens and electorates of Nigeria are docile, lethargic and have fallen asleep. You ask how? with bad roads riddled

with potholes and craters, a middle class Nigerian would rather get an SUV to circumvent the ordeal (Pat Utomi). The Nigerian schools are not up to par with international standard and are cursed with the strikes, a middle class Nigerian would rather spend vast amount of money on his/her ward to study in Europe and America to circumvent the Nigerian educational system, there is no direct mains supply water to people's property, a middle class Nigerian would rather sink a borehole within their premises to be self-sufficient to circumvent the ordeal, no 24-7 or stable mains or grid electricity supply, a middle class Nigerian would rather equip their house with generator, inverter and solar panels to circumvent the ordeal. The majority of the middle class then turn around to complain that there are no jobs for their children, "market is not moving", "I am tired of this country".

Nigerians have failed to demand our inalienable rights.

The Nigerian middle-class that is meant to be the conscience of the country will try at every cost to avoid having the necessary conversation or taking action to move the country forward. Clearly, Nigeria's leaders are not entirely to blame.

Separately, there is need to report on a through dissected analysis of some critical institutions in Nigeria; the Police, three arms of Government, Media, INEC and finally Political Parties.

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF)

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and their various sub-division are generally known for being notorious vis-à-vis their treatment of the citizens of Nigeria. This is pathetic. There have been egregious reports (over the years) of members of the NPF conniving with criminals i.e Kidnappers, armed robbers, smugglers etc. Since the basic needs of man are food water and shelter, but if such a person is unable to make ends meet legitimately, there is the propensity to engage in illicit deal to enrich themselves. Put simply, a large section of Nigerian population (including the members of the NPF) have been and are currently being marginalised and disenfranchised vis-à-vis a decent minimum wage. This itself is dangerous, hence the NPF is known to be brutal. Afterall, a hungry man is an angry man, it is no surprise that arming a hungry man in NPF uniform vested with some state power has led to casualty on the part of many innocent and perceived suspect.

The professionalism of the NPF sometimes is incredulous. It sometimes appears that they are misinformed on the provisions of the Nigerian constitution on how they should discharge their duties or perhaps pressured by the executive arm of the government. The latter highlights some critical issues or flaws in the Nigerian constitution that needs to be addressed. Some eminent legal practitioners have argued that the NPF should be under the Judiciary arm of government to prevent the prevalent abuse of the NPF by the executive arm of government as is sometime the case in the society. The need for State police has become a topical issue since the resurgence of the "Farmers & Herdsmen clashes". It is quite alarming that the

government seems to be complacent, perhaps complicit and are yet to "nip the issue in the bud". This is a testament to the leadership crisis in Nigeria and Africa at large. Digging deeper, it is worrying that NPF does not seek to be on par with global best practices; things are still done in primitive ways. They still erect roadblocks to search random cars on highways, conduct vehicle document checks on the highways. This explains the low productivity levels of the country. In developed countries, the norm on highways is to keep traffic flowing. Therefore, there is no need for police roadblocks unless in emergencies or ongoing- road works. Arresting suspects should involve background investigative work and gathering of evidence that could be used for litigation. Ideally, all vehicles should be registered in the country with an owner with a fixed address, so the authorities can trace vehicles to their owners via a network of traffic cameras. The summary on the NPF is that police are not well paid catered, hence why they don't discharge their duty responsibly most times.

To effectively address these issues, it is important that the NPF are given better pay packages, better trainings and most importantly restructuring that help to create an independent NPF with patriotic men and women with conscience.

Media

Journalism in Nigeria is known to be marred with corrupt elements and the fact that popular media houses are owned by political gladiators have made it worse; the masses are then fed with what is politically correct or fictitious in order to satisfy their owners. The media should be a forum through which the masses or electorates can engage their representatives in government. The Nigerian media need to improve its performance and be ready to hold the feet of government to fire in areas pertaining to their campaign promises, performances and delivery of the dividends of democracy. Recap, this article is premised on research, many tv interviews of credible Nigerians with conscience. Sometimes, Journalist ask questions as if they are disconnected with reality and the plight of Nigerians. Is this based on the "Objectivity" philosophy?

The Nigerian legal system is an accusatorial system; where the law court operates as an impartial referee between the defense and the prosecution. The media in collaboration with the NPF almost always jettison this when suspected criminals are paraded and the media goes around to play an inquisitorial role which is contrary to the accusatorial legal system; supposedly, no one is guilty unless pronounced guilty by a law court.

In other climes suspected criminals are not paraded before the media for condemnation by the public before they are charged to court. It is quite absurd to have government make law and the same law is flagrantly violated by authorities, police, government officials and their appendages. Such a society is full of chaos and confusion. Afterall, impunity breeds impunity.

Judiciary; the hope of common man

The judiciary at all levels of government seems to be docile and reticent to wade into this matter and checkmate the executive and police to make sure the fundamental human rights of all Nigerians are respected. Benjamin Disraeli once said, "Individuals may form a community but it is institutions alone that can create a nation".

Government in Nigeria is individualistic and the institutions that should be sacrosanct have been subjugated by the powerful men.

The integrity of some judges are questionable. There are news of purchase of judgement by the political elites; this is shocking and atrocious.

Corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian national fabric.

Legislature

For years, issues relating to grand scale corruption in the legislative arm of government of Nigeria; budget padding, humongous remuneration package and emoluments have been a topic of discourse in the society. It is seemingly absurd that a country like Nigeria with highest paid senators in the world is also the poverty capital of the world. This then begs a series of questions about the responsibility of the Nigerian government towards its citizens:

Can the Nigerian State continue to pay Senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria \$40,000 per month? whilst average citizen is paid \$82 per month?

Should the Nigerian state be paying state governors who served for 4 or 8 years life pension? whilst workers who have put their nose to the grinding stone and served the nation for 35 years are fainting and collapsing on the queues or streets around the country in a bid to collect their meagre pension?

Can the Nigerian state continue to sustain this profligate lifestyle?

It is somehow shocking that no legal action has been taken against the Senate with regards to the ridiculous earnings of its members. The conscience of the nation is asleep.

These are questions that can ultimately be answered by Nigerians who have been economically, financially, socially and psychologically disenfranchised and marginalised across the length and breadth of the nation.

Some scholars have proposed that the Nigerian government's spendthrift is so much and that the bi-cameral Legislative system should be changed to unicameral legislative system, others have proposed that the legislative role be changed to a part-time role. The Nigerian political elite seemed to have made up their minds to milk the Nigerian state to comatose.

The leadership issue at hand in all sphere of government in Nigeria is dire.

The standard or qualification for the leadership positions need to be raised in order to have credible people with good portfolio into public offices. Paying government officials exorbitant remuneration is an inducement for leadership by

state conquest (George Ehusani). One begins to wonder what majority of legislatures in Nigeria have achieved in their lives prior to entering the corridor of power. They suddenly become overnight millionaires who drive luxurious vehicles around and engaging in prodigious spending of our commonwealth. This mentality or philosophy by which the government in Nigerian state is portrayed promotes materialism at the expense of hard work to get wealthy. This means greedy ones strive to get into governments in order to acquire wealth at great cost to the Nigerian populace. It is a known phenomenon that the Nigerian Legislative houses are filled with corrupt element. After all, "He who must come to equity must come with clean hands". According to comrade Declan Ihekaire "What law can corrupt lawmakers make? the laws they are making is lawless!"

Revisiting Disreali's, point that "Institutions alone can create a nation" does not neglect the fact that human beings will run those institutions. It is believed that this is premised on the view that people running the institutions will have respect and abide by the rules, laws, codes of conduct that guide or dictate how the institutions should be run; that is everyone is equal before the eyes of the law.

Nigeria is in a sticky situation and has been caught in a vicious cycle; "about 1% of the elites own over 90% of the wealth of Nigeria" (Comrade Lanre Adeleke) and have refused to give quality education, decent wages and job opportunity to the masses. This ultimately means that the masses are trapped by having to wait for the crumbs that fall from the table of the elites.

Leadership selection process

Electoral umpire in Nigeria; Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been playing a crucial role in conducting elections since the return of the supposed democracy in Nigeria at the beginning of the 4th republic. However, the independence of INEC is highly incredulous. Without digging to deep, the management of the last general elections were a testament to the fact that the commission still has a lot to do when it comes to conducting a general election. Firstly, they were reported issues of budget delay for the commission, others include logistics and inadequate manpower and mishaps of fire engulfing election materials. Elections are more like democratic festivals that happen every 4 years in Nigeria. The most important lessons that INEC should learn is that preparation for the next elections should begin from at the end of one election. Budget required to meet the target in the next 4 years should be outlined and spread across the 4-year cycle. INEC should be having access to the census data of every Nigerian and automatically enrol Nigerians that are eligible to vote once they are of age. INEC under the right leadership should have a vision of electronic voting for the 21st century, this would provide jobs for programmers and jobless youths who are roaming the streets of Nigeria. Needless to say, that the critical infrastructure needed to make this happen must also be provided.

Nigerian elections are marred with bribery allegations of INEC officials, which often results to litigation process. It is very ironic that university Vice-chancellor (as state Returning Elections officer) who would expel or suspend university students for examination malpractices would be alleged to have taken bribes from politicians who are vying for public offices.

INEC officials should be the one of the most patriotic and uncompromising public officers, this point cannot be overemphasized as they are the ones that shape the nation.

Finally, unto the political parties. Political parties are meant to be Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) that have a guiding philosophy and ideologies that help to propagate the development of the Nigerian society. The political spectrum is largely dominated by two main parties with no major difference. Hence politicians cross-carpet from one party to the other. Nigerians decided to have a taste of the current ruling party, but a dominant majority of the populace can hardly tell the difference between the ruling party and the opposition. Some say, "the ruling party is just a new wine in an old wine skin".

In the United States for example, there are two main political parties; Republican Party & Democratic Party. The first is known to be very conservative and whilst the latter is an ardent supporter of American liberalism and progressivism. Political party activities and processes are heavily dominated by God-fathers and God-mothers. Having these parties run by cabals is incongruous to the principles of democracy; ultimately, it undermines the inalienable rights of the citizens as they are hardly presented with credible, competent and tenacious individuals that can steer the ship of state to El Dorado.

Conclusion

From Kingsley Moghalu's book; *Build, Innovate & Grow*, he established that leaders are meant to inspire, unite and motivate their followers. That means that leaders in Nigeria have more work to do in uniting Nigerians as the country is easily polarised along religious, tribal and ethnic lines. It is therefore essential that the constitution of Nigeria be revisited; a clear guiding philosophy has to be established in Nigeria; there has to be a clear definition on who a Nigerian is; and most importantly the need to make every ethnic and tribal affinity secondary for the cause of Nigeria; this simply means everyone will be seen as a Nigerian first before they are seen as Igbo, Hausa or Yoruba etc.

When the system is devoid of cabals, then the citizens and civil society organization can hold public officers accountable for their campaign promises and make sure they deliver. Nigerians need to start engaging the electoral and political process to demand better lives; security, decent living wage, 24/7 electricity supply, access to clean water, good quality roads, rail network etc

Recommendation

Politics is the driver of national development and transformation. Nigeria cannot move forward without restructuring the electoral process, that will give room for credible, competent, patriotic, accountable and technocrats to be elected into public offices. It is therefore recommended that new cohorts of politicians will then go on to:

- * Establish a national philosophy for Nigeria, restructure all the necessary institution that serve as pillars of democracy (strong institution as opposed to strong men)
- * Establish an independent judiciary, proscribe the culture of impunity, prebendalism, cronyism, nepotism and favouritism, establish a clear vision for Nigeria through education, provision of power and various infrastructure.
- * Stand-by their social contract with Nigerians and ensure equitable distribution of the national wealth.

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